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26 March 1959

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CENTRAL

INTELLIGENCE

BULLETIN



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State Dept. review completed

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

26 March 1959

DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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25X1 *W* Watch Committee conclusion--Berlin: No significant changes bearing on the possibility of hostilities. [Redacted box]
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II. ASIA-AFRICA

W Morocco: [The Moroccan minister of defense asked on 23 March whether the United States would be willing in principle to supply substantial amounts of military equipment to modernize Morocco's 31,000-man army. The defense minister implied that the US response would have an important bearing on his government's attitude toward US interests in Morocco and stressed that the King is under considerable pressure to continue arms procurement from the Soviet bloc. He also indicated that a firm decision has been made not to rely on France as Morocco's primary source of materiel.] [Redacted boxes]
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Sudan: [The death on 24 March of the Mahdi, leader of the Ansar religious sect, may be followed by a gradual loss in the strength and unity of pro-Western elements. Sayyid Siddiq, the Mahdi's 48-year-old son installed as new leader, has nothing like his father's great prestige among the 1,500,000 Ansari. He does, however, have political aspirations of his own and might resort to some dramatic and risky action to rally the Ansari around him in opposition to the faction-ridden military government.]

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W
Watch Committee conclusion--Middle East: Situations susceptible of direct exploitation by Sino-Soviet bloc hostile action which would jeopardize US interests exist in the Middle East, particularly in Iran and Iraq. The situation in the area remains precarious, but a deliberate initiation of large-scale hostilities is unlikely in the immediate future.

Iraq: The drift of Iraq toward Communist control continues.

Jordan: The absence of King Husayn and Prime Minister Rifai from Jordan provides opportunity for intensified political activity among disaffected elements and a possible coup attempt.

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Japan: [Strong condemnation of the Socialist party is developing in Japan over its recent action in support of Communist policies in Asia. The press, including those newspapers normally friendly to the Socialists, are highly critical of the party for its "subservience" to Peiping. Considerable dissension has also arisen within Socialist ranks, with some right-wing elements threatening to bolt the party. The conservatives will probably exploit this issue to the greatest extent possible and hope thus to reverse Socialist electoral gains of recent years.]

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DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Morocco Indicates Desire to Purchase US Arms

[Moroccan Defense Minister Mohamed Aouad inquired on 23 March whether the United States would supply some \$19,000,000 to \$23,000,000 worth of military equipment to modernize Morocco's 31,000-man army. Aouad said Morocco wants tanks, trucks, communications equipment, machine guns, submachine guns and ammunition, fighter and observation aircraft, and helicopters. He implied that the King is under considerable pressure--presumably from the left-wing members of the Ibrahim government--to continue to procure arms from the Soviet bloc, and indicated that the government has made a firm decision not to rely any longer on France as its primary source of materiel.]

[The more conservative Balafrej government, which had been unsuccessful in its efforts to obtain large quantities of light arms and ammunition and a munitions factory from Italy last year, had contracted for an unknown quantity of Czech arms. A part of this materiel was delivered early in January; an unspecified amount of heavy equipment, according to Aouad, remains to be delivered.]

[Aouad's inquiry is a follow-up to a tentative approach he made earlier this year as well as an informal request made during the King's visit to Washington in November 1957. With much the same motivation as Tunisia, which will not consider arms procurement from France while the Algerian rebellion continues, Morocco probably would resist even a suggestion that it should continue to place primary reliance for its materiel on France, if only for the sake of standardization. The Moroccan approach probably will create new tensions in French-American relations and may complicate negotiations for the retention of the five American air bases in Morocco.]

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Sudanese Situation

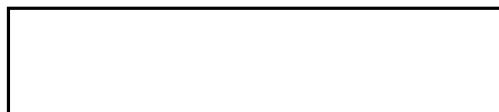
[The death on 24 March of 73-year-old Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, powerful leader of the Ansar religious sect and the Umma party, introduces a new element of uncertainty into the already highly unstable situation in the Sudan. The military government is split into competing factions, and the leaders of the suspended political parties are taking advantage of the government's indecisiveness to try to rebuild their organizations and increase their influence. They are trying to line up support within the army leadership as well, hoping to pave the way for participation in a new civilian government.]

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[The danger of a clash after the early March coup between Ansari tribesmen and military units has receded. The possibility remains, however, that Siddiq al-Mahdi, the new 48-year-old Ansari religious head, who lacks his father's prestige, may attempt some rash and dramatic action to rally the Ansari around him in opposition to the military government. In any event, the Mahdi's death will probably reduce the strength and unity of the Ansar sect and weaken the pro-Western Umma party elements which it supports.]

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Japanese Socialist Party's Leftward Trend Criticized

[Strong condemnation of the Socialist party is developing in Japan over statements in Peiping by party Secretary General Inejiro Asanuma in support of Chinese Communist policies in Asia. Asanuma, on returning to Japan on 23 March, defended the leftist position he assumed in Peiping and called for popular support for an early restoration of relations with Communist China.]

[The press, including those newspapers normally friendly to the Socialists, are highly critical of the party for its apparent abandonment of neutrality. An editorial in Asahi, a generally left-wing newspaper with the largest circulation in Japan, warned the Socialists that a "pro-Communist subservient diplomacy" would not win the support of the people.]

[Considerable dissension has also arisen within Socialist ranks, with some right-wing elements threatening to bolt the party unless the leftist trend is reversed. The faction led by Suehiro Nishio has openly criticized Asanuma's statement in Peiping that the United States is the "common enemy" of Japan and China. The right wing generally has shown dismay over Asanuma's issuing a joint communiqué with the Peiping régime which endorsed Communist political objectives in Asia and has denounced a decision to form a joint front with the Communist party and other leftist organizations in opposition to the US-Japan security treaty.]

[The conservatives will probably continue to exploit this issue in an effort to halt further Socialist gains in the upper-house elections in June. Ambassador MacArthur believes the willingness of government leaders to meet squarely the issue raised by Asanuma is in healthy contrast to the tendency in past election campaigns to avoid such controversial questions. He also said that if the conservatives exploit the issue properly throughout the election period, the Socialists should suffer from the attitude of the Asanuma mission to Peiping.]

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